

down. It has been demonstrated again and again, at some of our best schools, that the school day of five hours is quite long enough to enable a good teacher to turn out well-trained scholars. Home lessons are now discontinued, so far as I can gather, by all but a few old-fashioned teachers, who cannot depart from the ancient ways, and by about as many novices, who will learn in time that the goal at which they aim is to be reached none the sooner by a fussy and feverish haste. If, after returning home, the older scholars have any intellectual energy to spare, as will frequently be the case, let them, instead of poring over the dreary text-books, do some reading on their own account. Those excellent institutions, school libraries, are becoming increasingly common. There are not many neighbourhoods now where, either from the public or school library, a boy or a girl with a taste for literature cannot get access to "Robinson Crusoe," Scott's "Tales of a Grandfather," or Stanley's "Dark Continent." One of the most mischievous results of the modern plan of swallowing up all the pupils' evening in school work is that it absolutely kills the taste for general reading—one of the best things that a boy can take away with him from school.

A word of friendly warning to teachers as to the working of the new code of regulations will, I think, be taken in good part. By the substitution of class for pass subjects in such matters as history and geography the work of the teacher has been rendered sensibly less irksome, while the complexity, both in examining and recording, involved in the introduction of class and extra subjects has correspondingly added to the work of the Inspector. Moreover, several Inspectors have, as it were, stood sponsors for the teachers that the subjects excepted from the operation of the pass test shall not suffer. I trust that the confidence thus shown will not be misplaced. It would indeed be a pitiable result if the relaxation granted—which may ultimately lead to the gradual abolition of the standard system—should be so abused as to necessitate a reimposition of the old restrictions. Means will, however, certainly be found by Inspectors of marking very unmistakably their sense of any falling-off in the teaching of the class subjects.

I subjoin my estimate of the state of each school when it was last examined.

Although the seventy-eight schools that have been examined this year cannot well be crudely sorted into black and white, an estimate may be given showing to what general conclusions my inspections and examinations have led me. Fifty-five schools may be said to be in a thoroughly satisfactory state, seven are but indifferently taught, and the remaining sixteen have done badly. Changes of teachers will account to some extent, but not altogether, for the shortcomings of seven of these, and the sickness of the teacher excuses the eighth. I was unable to find any extenuating circumstances for the failure of the rest.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

W. C. HODGSON, Inspector,

NORTH CANTERBURY.

1.—Mr. EDGE'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Education Office, Christchurch, 26th March, 1886.

I have the honour to submit the following general report for the year 1885:—

During the year I examined seventy-seven schools in standards, besides taking part in the examinations of all the large schools except that at Lyttelton. Sixteen schools were also re-examined by me, either by direction of the Board or in accordance with the wishes of the Committees. I also examined and reported on the schools in connection with the Burnham Institution and the Lyttelton Orphanage. Visits of inspection were paid to fifty-nine schools. A very considerable portion of my time was taken up during the months of April and May in assigning marks for efficiency to those candidates who had gained certificates at the annual examination of teachers, and in preparing, for the information of the Education Department, lists of those teachers who had died or left the service of the Board during the year. A return was also made out of all teachers entitled to promotion in their respective classes. As the work of many teachers in the district was almost unknown to me, this last return meant something more than writing down a mere list of names. I had to look up reports and visit schools for the purpose of seeing the teachers at work before coming to a decision. I tried to make the return as complete as possible, but I believe that the names of a few deserving teachers were overlooked. The work of inspection in this district has been very much interrupted during the past three or four years, and these interruptions have entailed on me a large amount of extra labour. During the last four months of the year it was one continuous round of examining during the day, and valuing papers, filling in schedules, and reporting during the evening. In almost every instance the head-masters of the schools examined were promptly supplied with the names of the pupils who had passed the several standards. In the case of some schools that had done very badly I purposely kept back the schedules until I had an opportunity of comparing them with those of the previous year.

The total number of pupils enrolled in the schools examined was 18,770, or an increase of 752 as compared with last year. Of these, 16,780 pupils—89 per cent. of the enrolment—were present on the days of examination. The following table shows the enrolments and attendances for the past three years:—

TABLE No. 1.

	1883.	1884.	1885.
Enrolment	17,565	18,018	18,770
Number present at examination	15,019	15,679	16,780
Percentage	85	87	89